AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A vehicle steering apparatus comprising:

a housing for supporting coaxially a steering shaft and a rotating cylinder, said rotating cylinder being provided with a screw mechanism constructed between said rotating cylinder and said steering shaft for moving in an axial direction for the purpose of steering and being rotated by a transmission from a steering motor, said housing being constructed in a separated form having first and second housings, said first and second housings being fit to each other by a spigot-joint fitting on an outer side of a retaining part of a thrust bearing for thrust-supporting said rotating cylinder,

wherein the retaining part has a first portion whose diameter is smaller than a diameter of a second portion thereof which secures concentricity of the first and second housing, thereby providing a first gap, and the [[a]] first gap is provided in a part that constitutes a part of the spigot-joint fitting part of said first and second housings and that is located radially outward from a fixing nut screwed into said retaining part in order to apply a tightening force on said thrust bearing from one side, and

wherein said first gap substantially overlaps, in the [[an]] axial direction, with a screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part, and

wherein said fixing nut is in direct contact with said thrust bearing, [[and]] said first gap is larger than a second gap on a part of the spigot-joint fitting part where said first gap is not provided, and the first gap is provided adjacent to the second gap in the axial direction, and

within said first gap, an increase in an outer diameter of the retaining part caused when the fixing nut is tightened is absorbed.

2. (Previously Presented) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said screw mechanism is a ball screw mechanism and said ball screw mechanism is constructed such that a screw groove formed in an outer periphery of said steering shaft is engaged with a screw groove formed in an inner periphery of said rotating cylinder via a large number of balls.

3. (Previously Presented) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising an escape stopping ring, said escape stopping ring being in contact with an end face of said fixing nut from an opposite side of said thrust bearing.

4. (Original) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said thrust bearing is a twin angular contact ball bearing having a common outer race tightened by said fixing nut.

5. (Original) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said thrust bearing is a shield bearing provided with a shield member on both sides of rolling elements.

6. (Original) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said rotating cylinder has, in an outer periphery, a gear wheel that engages with a pinion of an output shaft of said steering motor.

7. (Original) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said gear wheel has resin gear teeth.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously Presented) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first gap is located directly above the screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part.